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WOULD GROW PERSIAN LAMB  
FURS ON AMERICAN FARMS

Tests by Department of Agriculture Show Crosses  
With Karakul Breed Produce Good Quality  
Broadtail, Persian Lamb and Caracul

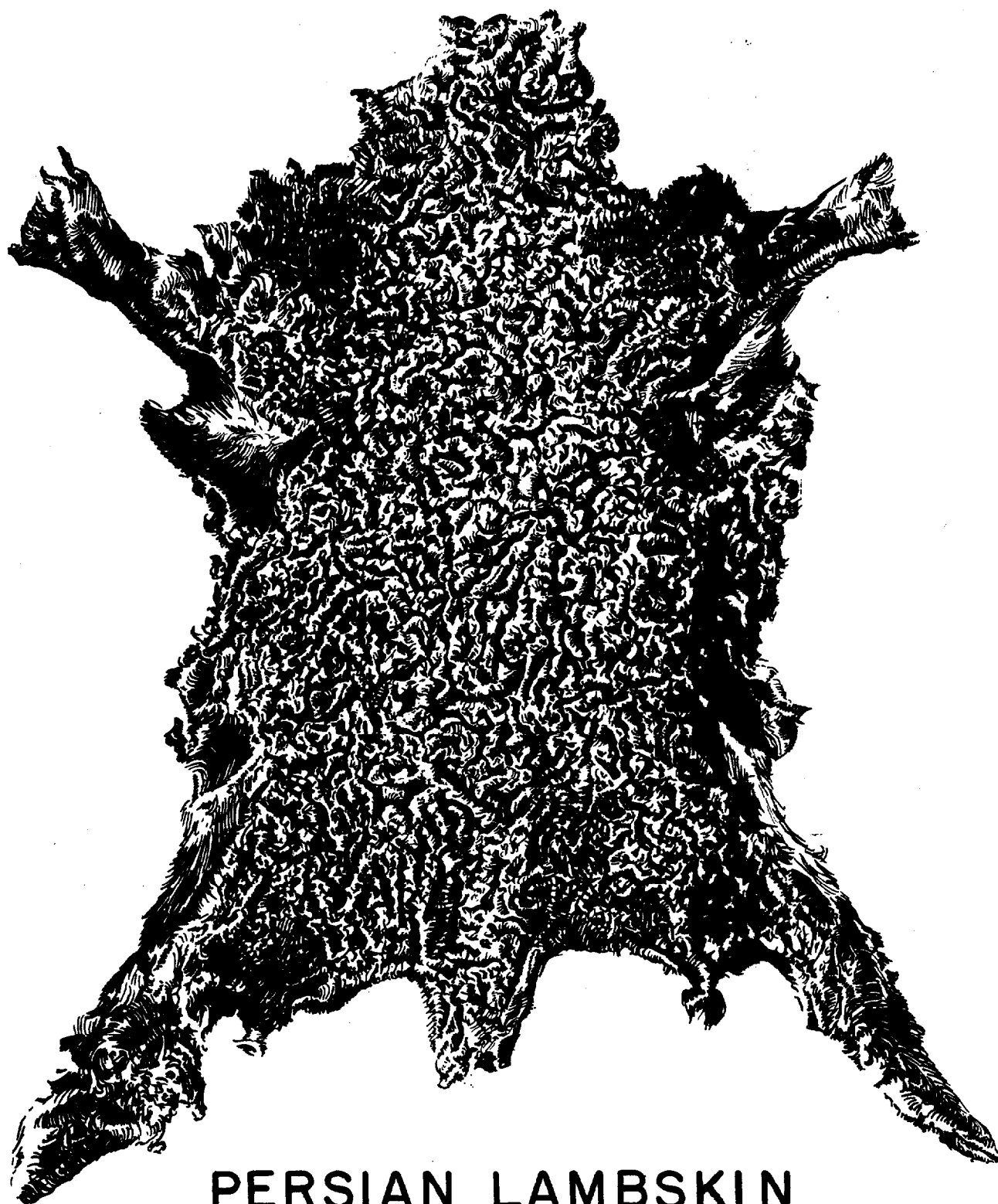
With current fashions popularizing three types of fur, all coming from the same source -- Karakul sheep -- the United States Department of Agriculture through its Bureau of Animal Industry and Bureau of Biological Survey is deeply interested in breeding experiments which may mean that ultimately American farmers can produce the fur for which the American fur trade paid more than \$2,000,000 last year and more than \$3,000,000 in the past five years.

The three types of fur, all popular in the clothing trade today, are broadtail, Persian lamb, and caracul. The three general types are different in appearance and have a wide quality range.

Of the three, broadtail is the most valuable. The production, however, is small compared to the other two types. It is produced usually from pre-maturely-born lambs and is a flat, lightweight, lustrous fur with a water-wave pattern. Despite its higher price, broadtail is the least durable of the three.

Next in value is the "Persian lamb." This type of fur comes from Karakul lambs three to 10 days old. It has a tight, lustrous curl that must be watched carefully from the time the lambs are born. The curl is likely to open rapidly

(See Illustration on Page 2)



## PERSIAN LAMBSKIN

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after the fifth day and while the value increases with the size of the pelt, it is essential that the curl remain tight.

Caracul is merely a trade name given to the lustrous, open type of fur which shows a wavy moire pattern free from close curls. These skins are usually light in weight and are best if removed when the lambs are not more than two weeks old, although this type pelt does not deteriorate so rapidly as the lambs grow as either the broadtail or Persian lamb types.

There are a number of reasons why American farmers can not produce enough for domestic demand: There is only a small number of purebred karacul sheep in this country. The basis for this stock came from small importations from Bokhara, Central Asia, native home of the Karakul, in 1909, 1913, and 1914. Further importations of animals of this breed are next to impossible because U.S. animal quarantine regulations prohibit direct importation from their native country and indirect importations, after being held for the required length of time in another country, are too expensive.

Facing this situation the two Bureaus of the Department have been cooperating in a breeding program which promises good results. Realizing the near impossibility of increasing the breed to any appreciable extent from present stocks of purebred animals now in the country, the Department has been carrying on a crossbreeding experiment at the National Agricultural Research Center at Beltsville, Maryland.

In this experiment purebred Karakul rams were crossed with Blackface Highland and Corriedale ewes. Blackface Highland sheep came originally from Scotland and the Corriedale from New Zealand.

Ewes produced from the crosses were bred back to purebred Karakul rams until this year when several lambs from four top crosses were available for fur study. The entire lamb crop, including crosses as well as purebreds, this year was used in a fur study by the Bureau of Biological Survey. Both the ewe and ram lambs were pelted, whereas in the past only the ram lambs were used in the fur tests. Fur specialists of the Department have found that the lambs from the fourth-top crosses grade comparatively high in quality and are readily marketable through the regular fur trade channels.

On the basis of current quotations, the following values were placed on the pelts:

Average price for Karakul-Blackface Highland crosses: 10 pelts from second-top cross, \$3.03; eight pelts from third-top cross, \$3.38; two pelts from fourth-top cross, \$5.62; one pelt from fifth-top cross, \$5.83.

Average price for Karakul-Corriedale crosses: three pelts from first cross, 72 cents; three pelts from second-top cross, \$3.47; nine pelts from third-top cross, \$3.33; five pelts from fourth-top cross, \$3.33.

Average price for 29 purebred Karakul pelts, \$4.26.

These prices were set on the raw pelts by three disinterested furriers on the New York fur market. The figures show that pelts from the second-top crosses and up compare favorably with the purebred Karakul produced at the Research Center.

Karakul sheep are noted for their hardiness and ability to thrive under adverse conditions. The mature animal develops a lustrous but coarse wool which is used in the manufacture of rugs, carpets, blankets and robes. Because of its limited uses the wool from the Karakul usually sells from one-half to three-fourths the price paid for good-quality white wool.

This breed has not been developed as a meat-producing animal although the meat is wholesome and can be marketed.

The only drawback to commercial production, the fur specialists say, is in the variability of the market. Such fur may be in fashion one year--out the next. Nevertheless, off years may be utilized in breeding up the flocks for the better marketing years. Meanwhile, sale of wool and wether lambs possibly would take care of expense in maintaining the flock.

Soviet Russia leads the world in Karakul-fur production, with South-West Africa, second, and Rumania, third.

Importations from Russia of lamb, sheep, kid, and goat skins, of which a large proportion were Karakul skins, as given by the Department of Commerce, are as follows:

1931 --	16,008 pieces valued at \$89,855.00
1932 --	924 pieces valued at \$4,164.00
1933 --	79,676 pieces valued at \$333,697.00
1934 --	101,036 pieces valued at \$663,373.00
1935 --	263,527 pieces valued at \$2,001,185.00

No figures are available on the production of Karakul fur in the United States, but it is known to be small. In the three importations of Karakul sheep from Bokhara only 34 rams and 33 ewes were shipped to this country. The larger part of the present domestic supplies have come from this source.